



**INDOCHINESE REFUGEE
SETTLEMENT PATTERNS
IN MINNESOTA**

by Glenn Hendricks

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Indochinese Refugee Settlement
Patterns in Minnesota

by

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The impact of escalating numbers of Indochinese refugees settling in Minnesota is being felt in a number of ways.

In recent months a particular issue coming to the forefront in some residential areas of the Twin Cities has been the large numbers of refugees moving into the neighborhood. While refugees can be found scattered throughout the metropolitan region they have tended to concentrate in certain areas creating real and imagined problems. Typically these are areas of low cost rental housing already burdened with the problems associated with low income marginal populations. The depth of this concern was demonstrated in a recent day long set of public hearings arranged by Senator Rudy Boschwitz during which public officials and neighborhood organizations were given opportunity to express the "problem" of housing refugees.

Lack of available information about refugee settlement patterns prompted this search for existing data so that the level of discourse could be placed in more concrete terms. No complete census of refugees currently residing in the state of Minnesota exists. Statements made about the size of the refugee population are at best knowledgeable guesses based upon piecing together several types of information. Statements about

total population size are, however, relatively more accurate than information about the exact location of the refugees. Alien address reports required to be filed annually with the Immigration and Naturalization Service are not available outside the agency. An attempt to place in a Department of Public Welfare computer file the name and address of all refugees contacting state and public agencies has been delayed. Even when the output of this file is available, its current accuracy will be in question because of the mobility of this population as it seeks permanent places in which to live.

Eventually it was determined that the most complete available source of information about residency in the state was to be found in a list of those eligible to participate in publicly supported medical assistance programs. It is estimated that approximately 75 percent of all refugees in the state are on the list. The rationale for basing our report on this admittedly incomplete list rests on the fact that it was the best information available and the assumption that most of those who were not on it have by and large achieved a degree of satisfactory accommodation to the new society. In a social sense they have begun the process of becoming part of the warp and woof of United States

society and are not part of the problems being associated with the refugee population.

We were particularly interested in looking at residence in the overall metropolitan area. While one group (the Hmong) had early concentrated in St. Paul, it was apparent that they have now spread more widely, oblivious to the boundaries of county and city administrative units. The situation has become one needing a wider perspective than that of a particular city health department, school district, or resettlement agency. Indeed, it is recognized that in some cases residency may be in one locale but services may be used in another.

Using the December 1980 roster of the Department of Public Welfare addresses of those eligible for medical assistance, addresses were plotted by census tracts in the inner cities and by towns and cities in outlying areas. It must be emphasized that the information used refers to cases and not individuals. Absolute numbers of individuals were available only for Ramsey County and therefore for our purposes of looking at the metropolitan region, this information could not be used. A case typically refers to a family, although in some instances of unmarried or unattached individuals a case may represent only a single person. On aver-

age, however, a case represents 3.6 individuals. We feel justified in presenting this information because our purpose is to demonstrate patterns of distribution of the refugees, and not absolute numbers of individuals. We emphasize that the absolute number of all refugees in the state is not known.

A further caveat is that these figures represent the status as of December 1980. The Department of Public Welfare estimates that approximately 500 new refugees a month currently arrive in Minnesota. They come either as primary (coming directly from refugee camps in Asia) or as secondary (moving here from another part of the United States) migrants. It is our belief that the additional immigrants since December would only elaborate on the existing patterns shown here; that is, heavier concentrations in already existing areas of settlement and further extension into some suburban communities.

RESULTS

Table 1. is a listing of the families (cases) to be found in cities and counties of the metropolitan area. Not surprising is that 41 percent

Table 1: Indochinese Refugee Families in the Seven-County Metropolitan Region, December 1980
(city totals given where 10 or more families were identified)

Anoka	65	Hennepin	1378	Ramsey	1791
Anoka	13	Bloomington	63	Maplewood	15
Fridley	31	Brooklyn Center	16	New Brighton	21
Carver	7	Brooklyn Park	52	North St. Paul	10
Dakota	121	Eden Prairie	10	Roseville	24
Apple Valley	16	Edina	13	St. Anthony	10
Burnsville	39	Hopkins	28	St. Paul	1700
Eagan	18	Minneapolis	1067	Scott	5
Hastings	20	New Hope	22	Washington	29
Rosemount	14	Richfield	38	Stillwater	20
		St. Louis Park	17	Seven county total	<u>3396</u>

Source: Based on public medical assistance eligibility records known to cover roughly 75 percent of the Indochinese refugee population. Average family size = 3.6 persons.

of the state's total refugee population can be found in the city of St. Paul and 26 percent in Minneapolis, while 82 percent are in the seven counties of the metropolitan region.

Table 2. lists the distribution of families in the outstate counties. It is noteworthy that refugees can be found in 57 outstate counties or a total of 64 (74 percent) of the state's 87 counties.

Maps 1. and 2. are dot maps of the location of Indochinese refugee families within the metropolitan area. Since our chief purpose was to demonstrate settlement patterns we chose to report the material by census tract within the two cities and by towns in the outer metropolitan areas in order to avoid public pinpointing of exact locations. The widespread distribution of the refugees is demonstrated by the fact that of the total 208 census tracts in the Twin Cities only 47 (23 percent) are without any refugees. Since the data represent only that 75 percent of the refugee population eligible for public assistance, it is possible that some of the more successfully resettled refugees may reside in these relatively affluent neighborhoods. However, areas of heaviest concentration can be found near the central business districts.

While the refugees tend to concentrate in a few areas, they are also widely distributed. This is due to the manner in which primary migration has taken place. Entry of a refugee into the United States is achieved through a local sponsor; in the past these were typically churches or individual Americans. One of the sponsor's initial responsibilities is to find housing for their charge. Sponsors are obviously in a much better position to be knowledgeable of available housing, often in their own immediate proximity. This results in a wider distribution of the refugees than is the case when they arrive as secondary migrants from some other locale in the United States or outstate without the assistance of a local sponsor.

Map 3. illustrates the impact of refugee settlement as measured by relative percent to the total population of each neighborhood. The data used represent two kinds of estimates, one based upon extrapolation of families (cases) to represent individuals (3.6 individuals per case) and the other the estimates of total populations as furnished by the respective city's planning department.

Table 2: Indochinese Refugee Families in Outstate Minnesota Counties, December 1980
(city totals given where 10 or more families were identified)

Becker	3	Jackson	17	Pipestone	12
Beltrami	2	Kanabec	4	Polk	2
Benton	2	Kandiyohi	14	Renville	1
Blue Earth	22	Koochiching	9	Rice	27
Mankato	19	Lyon	6	Faribault	21
Brown	7	McLeod	1	Rock	3
Carlton	2	Martin	9	St. Louis	92
Cass	7	Meeker	14	Duluth	64
Chisago	9	Litchfield	10	Hibbing	10
Clay	3	Mille Lacs	4	Sherburne	3
Cottonwood	1	Morrison	1	Stearns	151
Crow Wing	6	Mower	32	St. Cloud	129
Dodge	1	Austin	30	Sauk Centre	10
Douglas	3	Murray	1	Steele	13
Faribault	8	Nicollet	7	Owatonna	13
Fillmore	5	Nobles	26	Swift	5
Freeborn	2	Worthington	23	Todd	3
Goodhue	8	Norman	3	Wabasha	3
Houston	1	Olmsted	127	Wadena	3
Hubbard	1	Rochester	125	Waseca	1
Isanti	10	Otter Tail	3	Watsonwan	6
Itasca	4	Pennington	3	Winona	15
		Pine	3	Wright	5
				Outstate total	<u>735</u>

Source: Based on public medical assistance eligibility records known to cover roughly 75 percent of the Indochinese refugee population. Average family size = 3.6 persons.

As the map indicates, in St. Paul the Summit-University and Mt. Airy neighborhoods have the highest concentration. In Minneapolis parts of the Elliot Park and Phillips neighborhoods are the focal areas for the refugee population. In both cities these areas have relatively large stocks of older inexpensive rental housing.

One of the difficulties of obtaining concrete data on housing patterns of the refugees is that they are said to move frequently. This is especially so in the early months subsequent to their arrival. Aside from newspaper accounts, very little, if any documentation exists about any patterning of these moves.

A number of explanations for the nature of the residential groupings of refugees have been offered. They range from lack of available housing and desire of the refugees to pool economic resources to actions by unscrupulous landlords. Undoubtedly there is an element of truth in all such explanations. We offer here several which are usually overlooked.

As has been noted, primary migrants under the protection of local sponsors are usually housed in places arranged by sponsors. This results in most of their widespread distribution throughout the area. These initial settlements provide the nu-

cleus for further settlement in some suburban areas to the north and south of the Cities.

Secondary migrants, those choosing to move here from the place of first settlement in the United States, do not often receive such local aid. Usually they come here to join their kin or members of their clan, although entire groupings who are only peripherally related to local residents have been said to arrive from other states. It is under these circumstances that multiple family occupancy of a single family house or apartment takes place. The local resident refugee is under great social obligation to provide shelter for his kin or clanspeople. This is a pattern of behavior well documented in the ethnographic accounts of Hmong migratory life in Southeast Asia.

In many instances this hospitality is temporary until more permanent housing can be found. But this act of hospitality may be repeated a number of times as others arrive. Thus what may appear to be a confusing situation is in reality an explicable behavior. Even if no further attempt is made to find other housing, the social norm would be to extend one's hospitality.

Additionally, one of the striking contrasting features between Indochinese (as well as many other

societies) and American culture is their emphasis on communalism rather than individualism. The perspective or world view acquired by a person growing up in these cultures is a deeply ingrained sense of being a member of a group (family). An autonomous individual is neither assumed to be necessary nor desirable as it often is in American society. This is especially true of the Hmong. The implications of this for housing patterns is that the American sense of the need or even the desirability for privacy is not matched in the typical Hmong and many other Indochinese refugees. In fact, the physical isolation in moving to the United States is compounded by the sense of social isolation when they are separated from fellow kind.

Housing laws regulating such things as the number of persons allowed to occupy an apartment are premised on American values which may be in conflict with those values and practices which the refugees bring with them. For example, Hmong children are seldom separated from their parents' sleeping area until they are nearly adolescent. Consequently, a common occurrence is that bedrooms assumed to be assigned for children go unused, and from the refugee's perspective, should be available for others in need of housing.

The data for this paper were drawn from an ongoing study of refugee resettlement in the Twin Cities. This portion is presented at this time because it was felt that in the increasing debate over refugee resettlement it was important that this information be publicly available.

The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Jan Curry and David Hammond, two students of geography, who are responsible for the cartographic presentation of the data. A number of persons were helpful in our search for usable information. Unfortunately, otherwise useful information from one unit of government could not be presented because comparable information was not available from another unit. Particularly helpful were Jane Kretzmann and Charles Schultz of the Department of Public Welfare; Francis Randall, Minneapolis Public Schools; Jean Parilla, Hennepin County Welfare; and Steven Mack of the St. Paul Planning Department.

INDOCHINESE REFUGEE HOUSEHOLDS in the TWIN CITY METRO AREA, DECEMBER 1980

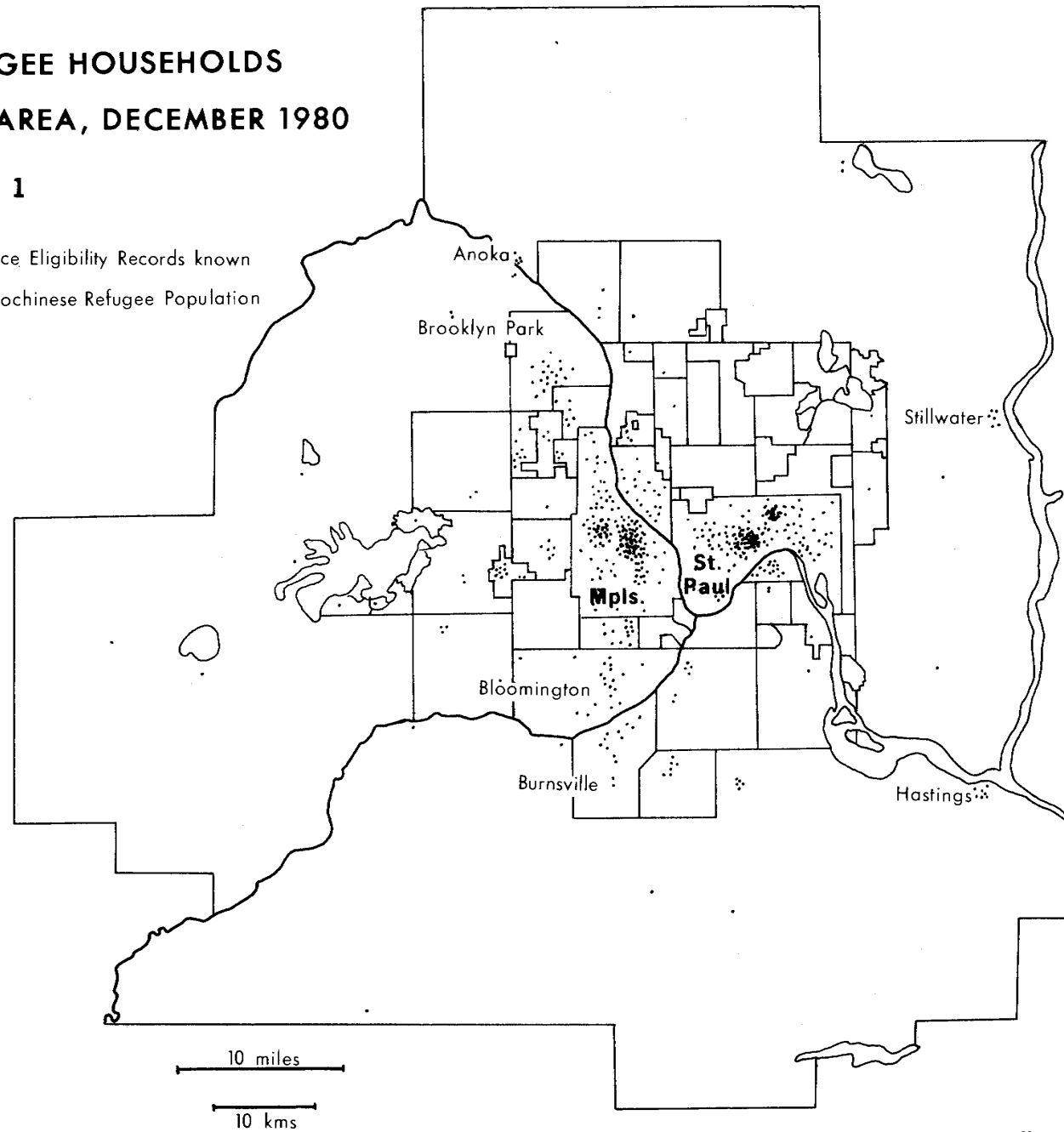
MAP 1

Based on Public Medical Assistance Eligibility Records known
to cover roughly 75 percent of the Indochinese Refugee Population

One Dot = Three Families

Average Family Size = 3.6 Persons

*In sparsely settled areas the dot
may represent only one or two families*

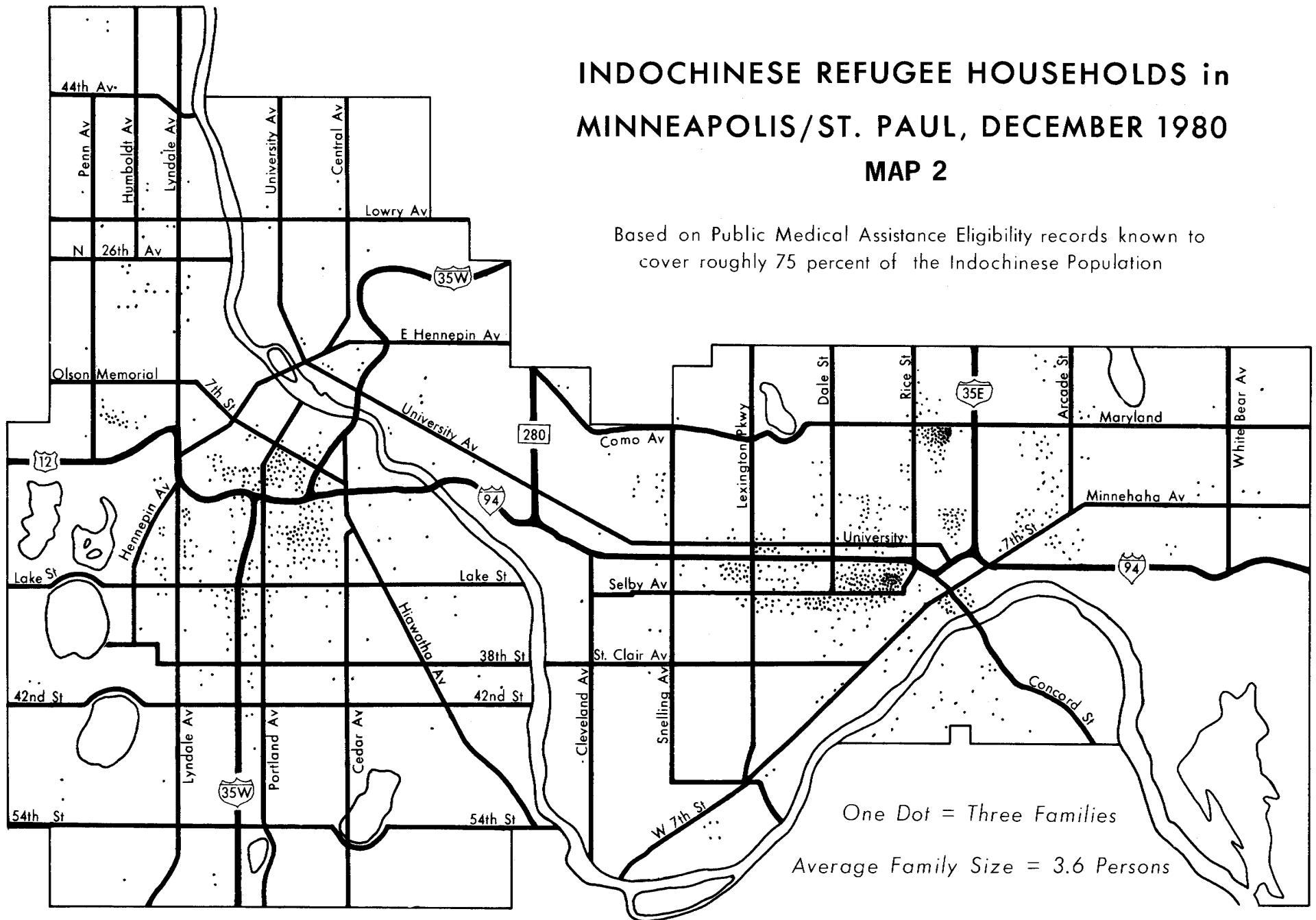


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INDOCHINESE REFUGEE HOUSEHOLDS in MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL, DECEMBER 1980

MAP 2

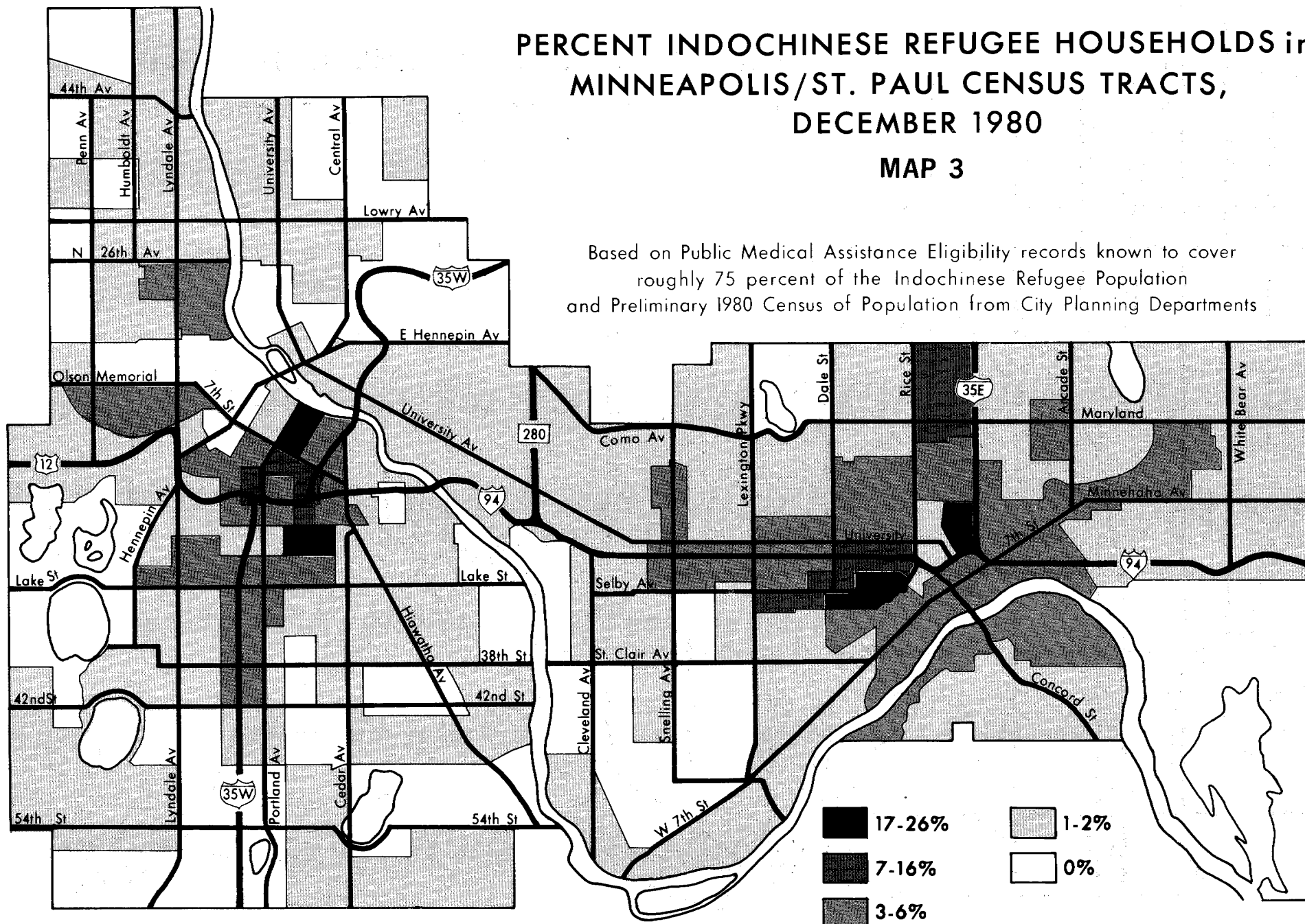
Based on Public Medical Assistance Eligibility records known to
cover roughly 75 percent of the Indochinese Population



PERCENT INDOCHINESE REFUGEE HOUSEHOLDS in MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL CENSUS TRACTS, DECEMBER 1980

MAP 3

Based on Public Medical Assistance Eligibility records known to cover
roughly 75 percent of the Indochinese Refugee Population
and Preliminary 1980 Census of Population from City Planning Departments



Indochinese as Percent of Total Population

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